

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 NIC-01 DRC-01 /138 W

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R 041655Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2181

INFO AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13449

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CZ, IT

SUBJECT: CZECHOSLOVAK PARTY DELEGATION TO ITALY

REF: PRAGUE 2750

1. AS FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE, KSC DELEGATION HEADED BY BILAK OR OTHERWISE DID NOT RPT NOT VISIT ITALY AS REPORTED REFTEL. POSSIBILITY OF BILAK VISIT HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF SEVERAL NEWSPAPER COMMENTARIES INSPIRED APPARENTLY BY NOVEMBER 27 ANSA REPORT FROM PRAGUE THAT BILAK DUE ROME NOVEMBER 28 TO MAKE CONTACT WITH PCI AND OTHER COMMUNIST PARTY REPS GATHERED HERE IN PREPARATORY SESSION FOR JANUARY CONCLAVE OF WEST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES IN BRUSSELS.

2. FACT THAT L'UNITA INITIALLY IGNORED SPECULATION ON VISIT TANTALIZED NON-COMMUNIST PRESS AND LED TO BELIEF THAT BILAK ACTUALLY HERE. HOWEVER, NON-COMMUNIST PRESS APPEARED TO ACCEPT NOVEMBER 30 L'UNITA DENIAL OF VISIT WHILE NOTING THAT PCI SPOKESMAN HAD ACKNOWLEDGED SUCH A VISIT, AT CZECHOSLOVAK INITIATIVE, IN FORMULATION STAGE FOR THE FUTURE BUT WITH QUESTION OF KSC DELEGATION LEADER STILL UNDETERMINED. IN LIGHT OF LATTER STATEMENT AND OTHER BITS OF EVIDENCE, PRESS HERE HAS CONCLUDED THAT VISIT WAS IN FACT SCHEDULED AS REPORTED

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BY ANSA BUT CANCELLED AT LAST MINUTE BY PCI LEADER BERLINGUER

WHO FEARED THAT PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF CONSULTATIONS WITH NOTORIOUS PRO-SOVIET SUPPORTER OF 1968 INVASION COULD SERIOUSLY STRAIN HIS DOMESTIC POLICY AIMED AT "HISTORIC COMPROMISE" WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

3. FONOFF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IS ALSO PERSUADED THAT VISIT DID NOT RPT NOT TAKE PLACE. IN ADDITION TO L'UNITA DENIAL, OFFICIAL CITED FACT THAT ITALIAN EMBASSY PRAGUE HAD REPORTED BILAK SPEECH TO KSC CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING ON THE SAME DAY (NOV. 28) HE WAS TO HAVE ARRIVED IN ITALY. OFFICIAL SAID HE HAD ASKED EMBASSY HOW THIS REPORT SQUARED WITH PREVIOUS EMBASSY REPORT OF BILAK VISIT ALONG LINES OF ANSA ITEM, PARTICULARLY SINCE HE ASSUMED THAT BILAK SPEECH WAS NOT LIKELY SOMETHING WHICH HAD BEEN CONCOCTED AND SCHEDULED AT LAST MINUTE. ADDITIONAL FACTOR MILITATING AGAINST VISIT, IN FONOFF OFFICIAL'S MIND, WAS DEPARTURE NOVEMBER 30 OF BERLINGUER FOR VISIT TO WARSAW AND EAST GERMANY. VOLPE

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